WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A license distribution management server for distributing licenses for watching and/or listening to digital contents, having:

purchase certificate generating means for generating a purchase certificate on the basis of a license purchase request received via a network, and

license generating means for receiving a license request via the network and generating a license matching the purchase certificate contained in said license request.

2. The license distribution management server according to Claim 1, further provided with a purchase certificate database for holding said purchase certificates, wherein:

said license generating means, on the basis of an account settlement completion notice received via the network, register account settlement completion information matched with the purchase certificate into said purchase certificate database.

3. The license distribution management server according to Claim 2, wherein said account settlement completion information includes at least information concerning the number of times a license can be granted.

4. The license distribution management server according to Claim 2, wherein said license generating means generate a license when the purchase certificate contained in the license request received via the network is included in said purchase certificate database and pertinent account settlement completion information is registered.

5. The license distribution management server according to Claim 2, further provided with license granting means for distributing said licenses, wherein:

said license granting means, when having received a reception notice for said license via the network, delete the purchase certificate matching said license from said purchase certificate database.

6. The license distribution management server according to Claim 3, further provided with license granting means for distributing said licenses, wherein:

said license granting means, when having received a reception notice for said license via the network, update the number of times said contents are provided.

7. The license distribution management server according to Claim 1, wherein said purchase certificate generating means generate a purchase certificate to which an electronic signature by which any alteration of said purchase certificate can be detected is generated and detects the presence or absence of the alteration on the basis of the electronic signature contained in the reception notice of the purchase certificate returned from a client terminal.

8. The license distribution management server according to Claim 1, wherein said purchase certificate generating means generate a purchase certificate to which an ID for distinguishing each individual purchase certificate is attached, register said ID into said purchase certificate database, collate the ID contained in the reception notice of the purchase certificate returned from the client terminal with said purchase certificate

database and, if the ID is found consistent, instruct said license generating means to generate a license.

9. The license distribution management server according to Claim 2, further provided with generated purchase certificate invalidating means for deleting, out of the purchase certificates stored in said purchase certificate database, those having passed a certain period of time since their generation.

10. A license reissue device requesting a license distribution management server provided with a purchase certificate database holding license purchase certificates and account settlement information to regenerate purchase certificates and account settlement information already deleted from said purchase certificate database.

11. The license reissue device according to Claim 10, wherein said license reissue device requests said license distribution management server also to regenerate information regarding the number of times the license has been granted.

12. A storefront server for selling licenses for digital contents, comprising:

account settling means for settling accounts of license trading, and

purchase certificate providing means for transmitting a purchase certificate to a client terminal having sent a pertinent purchase request, wherein:

said purchase certificate providing means, when having received a reception notice of a purchase certificate from said client terminal, instruct said account settling means to settle a pertinent account.

13. The storefront server according to Claim 12, wherein said purchase certificate providing means, when having received the reception notice of said purchase certificate, transmit a request for detection of the presence or absence of alteration of a purchase acknowledging signature contained in the reception notice.

14. The storefront server according to Claim 12, further provided with a purchase certificate ID database for holding IDs for distinguishing said purchase certificate, wherein:

said purchase certificate providing means transmit the purchase certificate, register the ID of said purchase certificate into said purchase certificate ID database, collate an ID of a purchase certificate returned from said client, when it has been received, with said purchase certificate ID database and, if the ID is found consistent, instruct said account settling means to settle the pertinent account.

15. The storefront server according to Claim 12, further provided with a purchase certificate ID database for holding IDs for distinguishing a purchase certificate container containing one or more purchase certificates, wherein:

said purchase certificate providing means generate and transmit said purchase certificate container, register an ID of said purchase certificate container into said purchase certificate ID database, collate an ID of a purchase certificate returned from said client, when it has been received, with said purchase certificate ID database and, if the ID is found consistent, instruct said account settling means to settle the pertinent account.

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16. The storefront server according to Claim 14, wherein said purchase certificate providing means, if the ID is found consistent as a result of the collation, delete the pertinent ID from said purchase certificate ID database.

17. The storefront server according to Claim 15, wherein said purchase certificate providing means, if the ID is found consistent as a result of the collation, delete the pertinent ID from said purchase certificate ID database.

18. The storefront server according to Claim 14, wherein said purchase certificate providing means are provided with failed-to-grant purchase certificate deleting means which, when a prescribed length of time has passed since the time a purchase certificate was transmitted, delete the pertinent ID from said purchase certificate ID database.

19. A client terminal for purchasing licenses for digital contents, which:

receives and holds a purchase certificate via a network, transmits a reception notice of the purchase certificate and, when it transmits a license request, attaches said held purchase certificate to the license request.